

***-Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act Preserves Seniors Relationship with their Doctors-  
-Attaches Fiscally Responsible PAY-GO Legislation-***

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) voted yesterday to preserve seniors' access to their doctors by fixing the way Medicare pays physicians. The Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act will permanently reform the Medicare payment system, repealing a 21% cut in payments to doctors scheduled to take place in January and replacing it with a stable system that protects seniors, preserves their relationship with their doctors and promotes primary care.

"By fixing this system in a responsible way we are ensuring that our seniors have reliable access to their doctors and the primary care they need," said Congressman Hall. "Medicare is a lifeline for America's seniors and this bill takes crucial steps toward strengthening it and providing the highest quality of care and benefits for our senior citizens. It's a critical companion bill to the Affordable Health Care for America Act the House just passed."

This bill tackles seniors' main concern – preventing pay cuts that could encourage doctors to stop seeing Medicare patients. It builds on the historic health insurance reform bill the House passed earlier this month, which will lower premiums, extend the solvency of Medicare by five years, improve preventive and primary care for seniors, and close the "donut hole" drug coverage gap.

"AARP NY thanks Congressman Hall for his leadership and support of this critical health care reform legislation which will ensure that seniors in Medicare are able to maintain access to the physician of their choice," stated Lois Aronstein, AARP NY State Director. "Without this legislation, physicians would face a 21 percent reduction in reimbursement rates next year leading many to stop taking Medicare patients and undermining the ability of millions of Medicare beneficiaries to get the care they need to stay healthy."

To underscore the commitment to reduce the deficit, the House attached statutory "pay-as-you-go," or PAYGO, legislation to the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act before sending it to the Senate. By joining statutory PAYGO with legislation fixing Medicare physician payments, we are making PAYGO more credible and effective – avoiding the need to waive it for current policies that Congress and the President have already agreed should be extended – and sending a clear message that we are committed to fiscal responsibility.

"By permanently fixing the way doctors are paid we are putting a stop to budget gimmicks," said Hall. "We're also reminding the American people and the Senate that new policies must be paid for."

With statutory PAYGO in place, all new tax and entitlement policies must be offset, restoring fiscal discipline and bringing down the deep deficits that face our nation. By enacting statutory PAYGO, Democrats are putting an end to the reckless "borrow-and-spend" policies of the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress and reinstating the principle that led America from record deficits to record surpluses in the Clinton Administration.

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